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RECOUP Working Paper 17

Globalising the School Curriculum: Gender, EFA and Global Citizenship Education

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RECOUP Working Paper No. 17**Globalising the School Curriculum: Gender, EFA and Global Citizenship Education¹**

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Abstract

Whilst the link between access, quality of schooling and gender equality in promotion Education for All is vital, the problematic nature of this agenda for the curriculum in developing countries is not sufficiently recognized. Previous sociological research indicates the contradictions between the social reproductive elements and the egalitarian potential of a 'globalised curriculum' especially in the complex postcolonial scenario of developing economies. A close reading of the EFA Global Monitoring Reports highlights rights within and through the curriculum, representing the 'curriculum as opportunity', 'curriculum as reform' and 'curriculum as a democratic tool'. However, gender equality represents a deeper challenge to dominant knowledge forms than that represented by a gender fair/friendly curriculum or a gender neutral curriculum. Global citizenship education controversially brings female subordination and gender power into the curriculum but its potential in relation to the goals of EFA is not proven. Localized historical and socio-cultural investigations are needed into the gendering of national school knowledge in non-Western environments, and its relationship to material and socio-cultural conditions of gender relations. Such investigations could account for different types of gender performances in school, and offer a transformative politics of recognition as well as redistribution.

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Introduction

This paper aims to bring the school curriculum into the analysis of gender, education and development. There is a marked absence of discussion both in the academic field of development studies and in the political domain of educational policy making around Education for All about what is required of the school curriculum so that it could help promote gender equality. All too often national school curricula reproduce gender inequalities in the public and private sphere and sustain hegemonic male regimes on a national and global scale (Arnot, 2002). Curriculum research, however, can challenge these social messages embedded in curricular formations as well as raise deeper questions about whose forms of knowledge should be transmitted through official forms of schooling. Critical sociological research, for example, recognises the importance of the rules governing the access and redistribution of knowledge, and also the politics behind the selection, organisation and evaluation of legitimate knowledge through formal national educational institutions within developing economies and the impact these have on indigenous social stratifications. It can also critically assess new global interventions into the school curriculum whether in the name of economic progress, human rights or social justice. These global developments are controversial not least because of the challenge they represent to what has been considered the prerogative of national governments – to transmit its own selection of educational knowledge to its citizens, using its own contextualised pedagogic style. The study of national curricula therefore offers the possibility of exploring the equity dimensions of global–national and local educational interfaces and policy agendas.

The paper has limited but hopefully valuable ambitions. It aims to initiate discussion of the curriculum in relation to gender, education and development by exploring the global significance of recent interventions on gender, and in particular girls' education. The first section briefly considers the implications of globalisation as a transformative process on the development of educational knowledge and queries whether the school curricula could address persistent worldwide gender disparities, inequalities and female subjugation. In the second section, we focus specifically on whether new global declarations around gender equality such as those analysed in the UNESCO Education for All *Global Monitoring Reports* imply certain roles for the school curriculum. The final section addresses the possibilities for gender equality implied by recent interest in global citizenship education – a new curriculum subject and approach that promises much. We consider in a preliminary way whether these new developments represent a move towards forms of educational knowledge that are critical rather than legitimating and 'normalising' in relation to gender inequalities.

Here we draw upon our work on national and global curricula¹ and the insights offered by Western feminists and critical sociologists on these new global curricular initiatives. As such, the analysis we offer is only temporary, waiting to be disturbed and enriched by post-colonial cultural critiques (Smith, 1999). In the long run, critical curriculum theorising must involve *localised* investigations into the gender politics of national school curricula in non-Western environments, linking such analyses to the material and socio-cultural conditions of gender relations in these societies. Western

critical analyses of educational knowledge with their emphasis upon liberal education, illusions of neutrality and hierarchies of knowledge expertise, are insufficient analytic frameworks for the study of such local cultural-curricular formations.

1. The Gender Politics of the Curriculum

Sociology of the curriculum in the 1970s and 1980s in Western European countries demonstrated the ways in which the school curriculum was a political arrangement and social construction, where what counts as knowledge is 'selected' and prioritised and where inevitably some knowledge is excluded or marginalised. Sociologists of education, following Bernstein (1977, p 85), saw that the way 'a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public', is central to any power structure. The distribution of power and principles of social control shapes the relationship between school knowledge, everyday local or regional knowledge and creates the conditions for the reproduction of social inequality nationally. Arguably these principles also play a part in shaping the impact of global economic agendas on national social stratification and educational systems.

Curriculum theorists, however, such as Goodson (1997) argue that if we look inside the curriculum, we will find forces that are both stabilising and destabilising. It has the potential both to empower and disempower women as well as men. Curriculum theorists in the West have demonstrated this in relation to inequalities in race, class, sexuality and gender. These inequalities can be reproduced (albeit in transfigured form) through *overt* curricular knowledge as well as through what came to be known as the *hidden curriculum* of schooling (teachers' values, school rituals etc.). Gender, class, sexual and ethnic identities were also calibrated, resisted, reworked and celebrated through peer group subcultures, classroom resistances and multiple alliances and allegiances. There is no simple equation, for example, between the representation of women in the curriculum and girls' definitions of femininity (cf. Arnot and Mac an Ghail, 2006).

Whilst feminist analyses of the curriculum moved from its own intellectual roots in liberal democracy towards post-structuralist and postmodern understandings of the performances and multiplicities of gender identities in contemporary Western societies (ibid.), it has never lost sight of the significance of political praxis – of teachers, researchers and youth. Critical pedagogues in developed nations aim to create dialogue, engagement and ownership amongst those disadvantaged by the social biases and negative representations found in school texts, teaching materials and teaching strategies. The aim of much critical pedagogy is to make clear to students that the curriculum is a site of meaningmaking and that the social construction of knowledge opens up possibilities of including their knowledge. Increasingly the voices and lived experiences of male and female youth have been drawn into the curriculum arena challenging dominant 'expert' and hierarchical organised knowledge forms. Teachers' gendered assumptions are seen as critical mediators of official knowledge – linking textual messages to teaching practice. The story of cultural and social reproduction through the curriculum is therefore now

recognised as highly complex as well as a deeply significant part of educational achievement. Schools are understood to be ‘productive’ institutions that create both agency *and* social stratification through their knowledge-producing work.

Some capability theorists have recognised this productive element of the curriculum in development contexts. Walker (2006, p. 175), for example, points to the importance of providing girls with ‘access to subject knowledge which will enable them to make future career choices, or simply enjoy this knowledge as an intrinsic good’. The access of girls to the more powerful subjects in schools (such as science and mathematics) becomes, from this perspective, central not marginal to an economic development agenda and a programme of gender justice. The curriculum represents a core development capability if made gender sensitive, offering girls’ agency and autonomy, aspiration and voice. Walker summarises this view:

Schools contribute, for many people quite substantially, to the formation of their capabilities to function. Ideally schools ought to equip people with the capabilities to pursue opportunities they value. How valued and valuable opportunities and capabilities are distributed through formal education to whom, and how this maps over structures of race, gender, class, ablebodiedness, religion, and so on is then a matter of social justice in education and hence for education policy. (ibid.: 181)

The study of the school curriculum within a development framework, however, needs to consider the context in which national curricula are being revised – that of globalisation and new global educational agendas associated with *Education for All*. These contexts, although linked, are not necessarily compatible. As a result there is considerable ambivalence, as we briefly indicate below, about the egalitarian potential of a curriculum that has been reshaped by globalisation – what we might call a *globalised curriculum*. Below we consider a number of different globalising influences on educational knowledge that might shape such a curriculum.

Globalisation, Gender and Educational Knowledge

Schooling historically was a very national affair and consequently curriculum theorists developed conceptual frameworks almost entirely within this national context. As Meyer (1999) points out, most critical sociological analyses have focused first on equality in access and achievement and, second, on the function of education in relation to the national societies that manage it. This has resulted in the field being:

inattentive to the actual curricular content of education (because the functionality of this is assumed), and also to the curricular changes that go on in response to rapid globalisation in the world (because the local or national character of schooling is assumed). (ibid.: 3)

Meyer argues for an analysis of how globalisation reconstructs national educational curricula and, in particular, how the school curriculum conceptualises ‘an imagined world society’. His attention is captured by the possibility that an ideal knowledge base for a global education could be found in a mixture of human rights, scientisation, rationality and natural law (Meyer, 1999; 2006) and by the standardised world visions proposed by such global agencies as UNESCO and the World Bank. Recently

these world visions, especially around Education for All, have placed gender equality at the centre of their recommendations.

Globalisation is associated with increased economic international exchanges between countries and linked to these changes are transformations in social consciousness about the involvement of future citizens in the world society (Meyer 2006). Three globalising curricular ambitions can be identified within many transnational initiatives. Here we focus on three global contexts: first, the global movement for *gender equality* (exemplified in the UN Millennium Development Goals); second the movement for *global citizenship education* (exemplified by the work of some international and national non-governmental organisations); and third the agenda associated with the global *economic outcomes* of schooling. Economic globalisation demands a highly skilled, mobile, economically literate and flexible male and female workforce. However, the values and motivations associated with this globalising thrust are sometimes in stark contrast to any notions of global equality of opportunity and social justice for all implied by the first two goals.

Burbules and Torres (2000) describe the complex educational scenario that schools in developed as well as developing economies now face:

new developments in cross-cultural education (for example, international education and global distance education); the impact of structural adjustment policies imposed by international agencies on developing countries in the name of creating a global economy; the rise of entrepreneurial universities in response to the pressures of globalisation; and attempts to reform primary and secondary curricula and teacher training in the name of globalisation, stressing the imperatives of flexible production required for international competitiveness.

(ibid.: 41)

These elements, however, suggest that educational establishments will have to cope with more than vocational/economic liberalisation and marketisation. Clearly, educating the new global learner will be quite a challenge. In a globalised context:

Crude moral codes or simple national identities . . . look very dated and inappropriate but then so do the forms of educational knowledge in current curricula. . . . In the new social order, educational institutions would need to provide basic social and political rights and offer opportunities to develop an informational base; acquire the skills of preparedness for conflict, capacity for compromise, civic courage, curiosity, tolerance of ambiguity and the making of alliances. These forms of education . . . have to stress the malleability of knowledge, the uncertainty of explanations and the relativity of perspective. . . . In such a future, it may make little sense to talk about knowledge as property or subject positions – rather reflexive modern individuals could be offered knowledge that was ‘possibilistic, probabilistic and uncertain’ . . . In the future, learning is likely to be intense, at speed, with ranges of choice and opportunities for immediate decision-making. (Arnot 2006a, p. 5)

As Rizvi (2000) points out, such globalised curricula could provide the space for the ‘production of the global imagination’. Whilst he recognises the fear that such new citizenship forms might represent unrestrained Westernisation, Rizvi argues that, in reality, a student’s global imagination is a product of a range of factors: globalisation ‘affects people and nations in a variety of different ways that are both asymmetrical and contingent’ (ibid., p. 222). For example when considering the perspectives of Malaysian students in Australian universities, Rizvi notices how, in contrast to colonialism, globalisation

has a commercial dimension that makes it sensitive to the needs of both markets and clients. It is sensitive to difference and preaches the need to respond to local needs. It has a culturally interactive disposition, even to the point of commodifying difference, constructing it so it can be sold in terms of language of diversity and multiculturalism. (ibid., p. 222)

These transpositional curricular spaces also offer opportunities for more radical educational approaches. The new global citizen could experience a curriculum that emphasises notions of mobility, multiculturalism, diversity and diaspora. It could also encourage ‘critical literacies’ (Kellner, 2000) and offer an analysis of the more pejorative effects of globalisation. Rizvi (2007) has further identified the need to foster key ‘epistemic virtues’ of historicity, reflexivity, criticality and relationality in global citizenship education related projects. From a gender perspective, such curricular opportunities need to be thought through carefully. Jill Blackmore (2000), for example, encourages feminists to at least consider whether globalisation (even though associated with unjust neoliberal agendas) could be a catalyst for the development of gender-equitable educational theory and practice. ‘Women feel both the pain and the pleasure associated with seductive notions of choice’, and they ‘largely bear the responsibility as the competitive state withdraws from its social welfare obligations while reprivatizing women’s productive labor’ (ibid.: 135). Yet despite this, globalisation encourages a reconsideration of the gendered relationships between citizenship, education and the market:

globalisation requires new understandings about citizenship vis-à-vis the nation-state in order to address the severe tensions between citizenship and the market, which put materialism against spirituality, rationality against emotion, selfishness against altruism, atomism against solidarity, wants against needs, along gender lines. (ibid., p. 150)

Globalisation has the potential to offer curricular space for women to consider what they want from citizenship and there is therefore a case for using the school to ‘understand better how these new formations and relationships are gendered and to consider how we need to develop anti-imperialist curricula and transnational feminist practice’ (ibid., p. 151). Wright (2001) also reminds us not to accept international human rights goals without considering the complexities associated with their Euro-American and colonial roots. He argues for the importance of recognising that ‘global history is a history of colonialism’ and that ‘those individuals who cannot recognise their own position within colonialism are often the most vociferous in their demands that human rights are the representation of universal values of freedom, equality and justice’ (ibid.. p. 224–225).

These few tentative examples of global curriculum theorising cannot easily provide us with a conceptual framework, although they indicate the directions which such conceptual thinking might take. Empirical/conceptual research is needed to unpack the ways in which globalised educational knowledge relates to international and national power relations, stratifications and critical social movements for change. Below we offer our own analyses of first, the curricular implications of Education for All and, second, the promise of global citizenship education.

2. The Curriculum of Education For All

The inclusion of a gender agenda within the development framework has been highly significant for the development of national curricula even if not initially appreciated as such. The UN naming of the International Year of Women (1975) and the Beijing Conference were especially important because of the explicit inclusion and recognition of the particularity of women's lives and their needs. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 'Education for All' (EFA) campaign, initiated by UNESCO in 1990 and reframed in 2000, represented the most recent examples of international efforts to increase and improve girls' education. The involvement of the World Bank and its particular conceptual framework has been important for developing the quantitative, timebound international targets. The EFA Dakar framework (UNESCO, 2000) required each country to produce a National Action Plan that also incorporated six specific, time-bound goals: these goals concerned early childhood care and education, universal primary education, youth and adult learning, literacy, gender and quality.

Whilst women's rights movements have praised the centrality of gender equality in this development agenda, there has been some concern that they, 'sideline key gains made in Beijing, Cairo and other UN conferences, set a minimalist agenda and fail to integrate gender perspectives into all eight MDGs' and that they do not therefore address the fundamental causes of poverty and gender inequality such as 'power, distribution of resources, militarism, fundamentalisms and current economic orthodoxy' (Barton 2005, p. 1). As an example, it is significant that, although the *EFA Global Monitoring Reports* (UNESCO 2002b, 2003, 2004) include many educational and gender statistics, only the most recent report includes any data that relate to the curriculum. Below we offer the first tentative steps towards a curriculum analysis of these reports.

Defining a Role for the Curriculum within EFA

The subtitle of this section is something of a misnomer because current documentation on EFA suggests that no such curriculum exists in an official sense. This is partly because the document recognises the rights of individual nation states to choose and administer their own school curriculum. Nevertheless, there is an implicit curriculum within the parameters of EFA that could well affect the form of this curricular provision in the longer term. *The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005* on the 'quality imperative' (UNESCO, 2004) goes so far as to set a policy framework for determining curricular aims and content (Chapter 4, UNESCO, 2004). Our own textual analysis of these documents has uncovered four interlinked messages about the role of the curriculum in gender equality embedded in these documents.

The first message concerns the need to include 'rights' within the curriculum. The 2003–2004 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* explores some of the reasons why girls are still held back in relation to education and equality. It identifies some of the obstacles and solutions by working with a framework drawn from a rights agenda. In particular it highlights the three aspects of gender equality that could be used to assess gender attributes of curriculum provision and the content of the curriculum. These are:

‘individuals’ rights *to* education and their rights *within* and *through* education’ (UNESCO, 2003, p.116). In the section on ‘rights within education’ the report describes some of the gender-based violence preventing schools from being places of learning, growth and empowerment (especially for girls) and focuses on how teachers’ attitudes and textbooks may help sustain the naturalness of such female subordination and male violence in everyday practice. It signals how ‘getting the curriculum right is important, although extremely challenging’ (ibid., p.145). If traditional gender values of the community are not taught in school (or they are challenged by schools), then girls may be prevented from coming to school:

In some countries parents may not send daughters to school if they feel that the curriculum is promoting ideas that are at odds with prevailing social norms. In Guinea, parents perceived subjects such as home economics, childcare and sewing, gardening and handicrafts as important for girls, and criticised their absence from the schooling curriculum. (ibid., p.146)

The report points to the importance of silences and subtleties in the curriculum as much as observable sexism as significant for the endurance of gender inequalities.

The second message concerns the need to consider ‘curriculum as opportunity’. The chapter ‘Lessons from Good Practice’ (Chapter 4, ibid.) heralds the role of the curriculum as essential for ensuring that girls should be given equal opportunities for ‘success and advancement’ whilst in school.

The role of the curriculum in this process is crucial, in that it is a key source of pupils’ knowledge about, and orientation within, the social world. This is widely acknowledged, and many countries have initiated reforms both to reduce biases in subject choices confronting girls and boys, and to remove any implications of gender stereotypes from textbooks and other teaching materials. (ibid., p.178)

However, it is not clear what criteria are being used to measure the success of these gender initiatives, and one of the few examples of textbook reform (i.e. in Cambodia) seemed to result in gender equality being ‘expressed mainly in an evenly balanced number of male and female illustrations . . . rather than in a way that would explicitly challenge cultural norms or traditions’ (ibid., p.178).

The third message concerns the need to consider ‘curriculum as reform’. The report suggests that there are eight aspects of education that gender equality policies should address. Six items on the list have identifiable links to curriculum change and reform (see Table 11.1). If these issues were addressed, it would have major implications for what should be taught. However, the UNESCO report offers little help to teachers to consider how they might deconstruct curricular materials, rethink teaching styles or redesign curricular offerings. Further, this list is strongly reminiscent of liberal feminist agendas in the UK in the 1970s that made no reference to any form of critical pedagogy or deconstruction of hegemonic male forms of knowledge (Arnot, 2002). All the UNESCO *EFA Global Monitoring Reports* were careful to emphasise that developing and changing the curriculum cannot be isolated from other efforts and reforms. For example, they emphasise the importance of simultaneously including gender awareness in teacher training.

The fourth message we found within the UNESCO *EFA Global Monitoring Reports* concerns the need to consider ‘curriculum as a democratic tool’. This message is not widely discussed in the report – it tends to be inferred. The underlying emphasis is upon the need for a greater political commitment to EFA goals and it is strongly suggested that these goals will only be met in some of the countries concerned if there is greater decentralisation and democratisation, not just of educational institutions, but also of the curriculum.

The subsequent *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO 2004) offers considerably more detail on the curriculum (although it still has limitations). Chapter 4 of this report is especially significant for placing curriculum policy and curriculum content more firmly on the EFA quality agenda. The ‘inclusive learning environment’ that is envisaged as an ‘essential attribute of high-quality education’ (ibid., p. 143) is linked with effective teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is considered in relation to appropriate and relevant curriculum aims, curriculum content, educational policy and use of time.

Table 1: What approaches to gender equality in the classroom should address

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- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Gender stereotypes, i.e. challenging stereotypical views such as girls being unable to benefit from secondary education or less able to succeed in maths or science |
| 2 | Sexual violence, abuse and harassment – raising awareness of these issues and using teachers to raise awareness of learners |
| 3 | Ideologies in the curriculum |
| 4 | Curriculum choices – e.g. encouraging girls to take mathematics, science and technology subjects |
| 5 | Teaching styles, including differential attention paid to boys and girls |
| 6 | Extramural activities – providing sporting opportunities for girls as well as boys; |
| | • differential enrolment of boys and girls in school; |
| | • school organisation and discipline – making schools more girl friendly |
-

Source: adapted from UNESCO, 2004, p.177.

The report recognises that knowledge about educational quality is an issue often overshadowed by issues of access, and indicates that better learning outcomes also relate to trying to ‘encourage creativity, originality and intolerance of injustice – non-cognitive skills that can help people challenge and transform society’s hierarchies rather than accept them’ (ibid., p.226). It also gives an overview of some of the contextual world problems, such as those relating to health (especially HIV/AIDS), violence (especially against women) and conflict (and its effects on schooling) that ideally should be acknowledged in a school curriculum, and which in turn highlight the urgency for building values and attitudes that promote peace by developing the skills of communication in schools.

The 2004 report focuses on ‘establishing appropriate goals for the curriculum, developing relevant content, using time well, ensuring that teaching styles are effective, carefully considering the language of instruction and developing a sound assessment policy’ as well as supporting ‘the supply, distribution and use of learning materials’ and a ‘secure, accessible physical environment with appropriate facilities’ (ibid., p.146). Crucially, however, it fails to problematise the school curriculum in relation to gender equity in education. For example, no gender and curricular differentiation is made in the statistical analyses. Thus, whilst the 2003–2004 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* places gender at the centre of the analysis but pays very little attention to the curriculum, the reverse is almost true with respect to school knowledge in the 2005 *EFA Global Monitoring Report*.

The 2005 *EFA Global Monitoring Report* hints at an uncomfortable relationship between knowledge and skills necessary for economic and ‘productive lives and livelihoods’ on the one hand, and concerns for ‘social and cultural values, human rights, greater equity and equality . . . good citizenship, democracy and world peace’ (ibid.) on the other. Although this report acknowledges that most weight is usually given to the former, this implied relationship between knowledge and values and societal power structures needed more in-depth consideration of gender. For example, one table (ibid., Table 4.1, p. 147) outlines the policy choices in determining national curriculum goals (reflected, for example, in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) but does not address the potential differential value clash between *generic/global* cognitive skills and values development and *country/local* cognitive skills and values development, for boys and girls.

To summarise, the 2005 report rightly reminds readers of the difficulty of assessing outcomes in terms of quality or values in the EFA project but it does little more than describe the curricular situations and fails to offer any suggestions about further research (such as the critiquing of dominant curricular knowledge forms or critiquing the contradictory notions of citizenship advocated in curricula). Once combined these reports create a vision of a gender fair/friendly curriculum but they do not offer a critically engaged intellectual challenge, on the grounds of gender, to national curricula. Perhaps this is an impossible task for a global report, especially given the diversity of national curricular patterns. The principles of what might constitute a gender neutral curriculum were identified and suggestions were given in the later reports on how this might be developed through teacher quality and the organisation of learning. The difficulty here is that the impression might be given that such a gender neutral curriculum could be achieved without addressing gender power relations, especially those embedded in ‘taken for granted’ curricular knowledge. Had such a challenge to dominant knowledge forms been signalled, it might have pointed to the relevance of uncovering the relations of power that sustain particular gender distributions of knowledge, and particular gendered knowledge selections, modes of teaching, styles of academic performance and assessment. A key international curriculum target might then emerge that validated women’s connected forms of knowledge and their life experiences, moral and political values, and civic virtues and their approaches to learning.

However, having said that, in more industrialised nations where educational priorities are not so focused upon access, global citizenship education appears to offer new ‘potential’ curriculum spaces in which gender equality can be positioned and discussed critically. The final section of this chapter therefore turns to this relatively new and not uncontroversial curriculum subject to consider whether it could be used to empower girls and women.

3. Global Citizenship Education, Gender and the Curriculum

Nearly half of all the countries that submitted data to UNESCO offer some form of citizenship education in schools. The possibility therefore exists that citizenship education could offer opportunities to engage critically with global gender concerns. Development or global education (comprising traditions such as human rights education, world studies, anti-racist education and peace education) can also provide relevant up to date sources of educational knowledge about gender. However, although the movement for global education in England is associated with a distinctive pupil-centred and participatory pedagogy (the affective dimension of global citizenship education being particularly important), its curricular implications are considerably more flexible and vague (Marshall 2005a). Global knowledge could, if developed, engage critically in an exploration of, for example, the relationship between North and South, and attitudes and values associated with global interdependence and global social justice.

Whilst the EFA agenda appears to be working with particular notions of the educated national citizen, the movement for global citizenship education in countries such as Canada, the USA, the UK, Germany and Australia has an explicit perspective of the student learner as potential ‘global’ and even the ‘cosmopolitan’ citizen. The latter goal encourages a critical engagement with the world, guided by a vision of global social justice. Thus whilst EFA and the Millennium Development Goals represent attempts to change the global gender context by setting targets to change national schooling, global citizenship education is an example of bringing the global gender context into the national agenda. Below we explore this latter agenda in more depth.

Global Citizenship, Cosmopolitanism and the Globalised Curriculum

Meyer argues that ‘the real unifying principle underlying the emergent global society is the natural human person . . . a human being with natural (rather than positive or associational) human rights’ (1999: 13). This sort of depiction of the common and/or natural personhood and the rights associated with this may provide the ‘cultural glue’ to sustain a globalised curriculum. Here ethnocentric, nationalistic or patriarchal curricula would be replaced by discussion of issues relating, for example, to the wider world environment, a science that locates all humans in common (such as the universe beyond earth), international human rights (and abuses), and political institutions emphasising global solidarity and shared understanding.

The concept of a ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’ (often interchangeable with global citizenship) suggests an allegiance to a new form of global civil society and a new global consciousness that

conceptualises a 'cosmopolitan order transcending state boundaries and focusing on the rights of individuals' (Carter, 2001, p.3). It addresses 'the global nature of threats posed to the survival of the human race and of the planet by nuclear and chemical weapons and environmental degradation, and on the trend towards a global economy' (ibid., p.3). Cosmopolitan citizenship embodies an 'awareness of cultural diversity, respect for other cultures and a desire for peaceful coexistence' (ibid., p.2). As a school subject, it would involve a range of cognitive, affective and action dimensions, empowerment and existential dimensions, and a cyclical learning process (Hicks and Bord, 2001). However, it is not self-evident that this new engagement with global social justice would necessarily challenge local/national gender (and other) power relations.

Significant curricular resources and initiatives (most notably through the work of NGOs) around global citizenship have emerged although not many specifically address gender issues. Gender inequality is often represented as a subsidiary issue to poverty or the Millennium Development Goals. Save the Children (UK, a member of the British Overseas Aid Group) has recently published *Young Lives, Global Goals* (Save the Children, 2005) with sections that specifically address gender issues (in relation to poverty, education and health care). This represents one of the boldest attempts at getting hard-hitting global gender issues into schools. Save the Children also links schools on its website and through its resource catalogue to information packs on other global gender issues such as *Forgotten Casualties of War: Girls in Armed Conflict* (www.savethechildren.org.uk).

Assessing the impact or indeed the amount of use this sort of curricula resource receives in schools is difficult. A recent two-year DFID funded research project in the UK (Davies *et al.*, 2005)² found that teachers, learners, teacher trainers and LEAs recognised the need to teach a range of global citizenship issues (such as religion, poverty and war) but again gender was not listed amongst them. Perhaps this lack of global gender issues related to the identified 'lack of confidence to teach current controversial issues' amongst teachers, teacher trainees and LEA personnel in the UK (ibid., p.145).

In contrast the gender profile in the Global-ITE (Initial Teacher Education) Project was more developed. This was a three-year project aimed at enabling trainee teachers in India, Kenya and England to 'link global and global social issues to each other, and relate them to the school curriculum; and to promote a global perspective on citizenship education' (Inbaraj *et al.* 2004, p.83). The project researchers recognised the limitations of teaching controversial topics (such as social justice as a problem associated with class, gender, ethnicity, drug taking, violence) and endorsed a more gender sensitive 'global' citizenship education. They emphasised the importance of 'not assuming that individual women's personal choices will be consonant with Western feminism, or even international feminism' (ibid., p. 84).

The project worked with teachers in all three countries. It encouraged debate about the nature and challenges of global citizenship education by considering issues of power and control. For example, it unearthed the contradictions between, on the one hand, Kenya's 'Social Ethics Education' that endorses the nuclear family and promotes the concept of marriage in which final authority rests with the husband, and, at the same time, endorses the Centres for Excellence Schools for Rescued Girls in Kenya that

educate girls who were at risk of female genital mutilation and/or early marriage. The Indian research team encouraged teacher trainers to design exercises to sensitise children to their own stereotyped attitudes and beliefs as well as gender stereotyping in school textbooks. Interestingly, in this case study, many trainee teachers felt that a focus on gender inequality in the curriculum was outdated, believing that issues relating to the media or the environment were more important (revealed in UNESCO, 2004). The study emphasised the need to 'take risks' within the curriculum, which might entail a more radical, participatory and empowering pedagogy than mainstream practice and the re-prioritisation of global knowledge. For example, global citizenship education in Kenya used drama and narrative, which dealt with issues 'ranging from the rights of ownership of one's body, to freedom from violation and pain, to human reproductive choice, and to independence of spirit' (Inbaraj *et al.* 2004, p. 88).

These global curricula initiatives promise a good deal and yet in practice they have yet to sustain a systematic gender critique of global or national citizenship frameworks. Their potential in relation to the goals of EFA is as yet unproven.

Some Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have identified some of the global visions of a gender sensitive school curriculum and have discussed a variety of ways in which a national curriculum can become 'globalised'. Global knowledge *can* be disempowering and global citizenship education can also be empowering but the reverse of both is also true. By excluding or marginalising knowledge about gender inequality, education may limit the potential of girls to foster voice and aspiration to increase their agency.

The curricular messages offered by UNESCO *EFA Global Monitoring Reports* are somewhat problematic and contradictory but they have started at least to focus attention on the interconnections between 'quality' of education and gender messages of the curriculum. The curriculum is understood as both an opportunity for individual/group progress and as potentially transformative of some aspects of social relations. The underlying theme is that different, possibly new, notions of the learner citizen can be created through the curriculum. But this still begs the question about what constitutes the most appropriate forms of educational knowledge that are needed to sustain gender equality. Should that new citizen be an upholder of global human rights, or local and national rights and cultural values or should young women and men not both be taught to acquire the skills of reflexivity, individualisation, flexibility more appropriate to the global order? The required forms of competence in the future might be focused, for example, less on learning traditional school subjects and more about achieving, for example, communicative competence, courage, flexibility, risk taking, the ability to sustain alliances and negotiation skills (Arnot, 2006a, b).

Gender equality amongst those Ulrich Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002) call 'Freedom's Children' would mean encouraging both young women and men to place themselves at the centre of their lives, to acquire knowledge that releases them from traditional social identities such as those of masculinity and femininity, ethnic, regional and local and national identifications. Gender

equality in this context is less about matching male and female access to traditional hierarchical and linear curricula, about ensuring equal male and female representation in school textbooks and materials, or equal participation in classrooms: it is about creating individuated selves who know about lateral thinking, interdisciplinary knowledge forms, multiplicities of truths, narratives and relativities (Arnot 2006a, b).

A gender analysis of the national curricula within development contexts requires (a) in-depth historical and sociological unpacking of national curricular norms, (b) a recognition (if not deconstruction) of the various male and female forms of knowledge and their representations in curricula, (c) an understanding of different types of gendered performances within different school subjects and, (d) a sensitivity to the changing gender relations brought about by globalisation and its significance in terms of female and male relationships to knowledge (Paechter and Head, 1996; Paechter, 2003). This sort of curricular analysis, which is relevant to the formation of the modern female learner citizen (as it is to the male learner citizen), is the next step in the promotion of gender equality in developing economies. Without such analyses, national gender regimes and male hegemonic power cannot be challenged – indeed many proposed curriculum reforms might well be what Nancy Fraser (1997) called affirmative rather than transformatory remedies, offering redistributive justice but not addressing recognition of cultural and gendered diversity (Arnot, 2006b). From this more critical perspective, egalitarian policies that focus on gender parity solely in terms of access to the school curriculum or indeed solely on schooling will only scratch the surface of gender inequality.

The goal of creating gender equality globally has reminded us that the school curriculum has more than a functional significance (Meyer, 1999). It has reignited the debate about the politics of educational knowledge in the twenty-first century.

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¹ This paper draws on Arnot (2006a, 2006b) and Marshall (2005a, 2005b, 2007) and Marshall & Arnot (2007).

² The qualitative study based in the West Midlands of England, which drew upon data from six primary and six secondary schools, three teacher training institutions and 13 Local Education Authorities.

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